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ADV FOR WEEKEND OCT. 8-9

DANCE:

ALICIA ALONSO'S GISELLE
STILL AMONG THE GREATEST
BY GLENNE CURRIE

UPI LIVELY ARTS EDITOR

NEW YORK (UPI) -- ALICIA ALONSO PROVED HER REPUTATION AS ONE OF THE FINEST GISELLES OF THE CENTURY WHEN SHE DANCED THE ROLE WITH HER OLD COMPANY, AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE, AT A SINGLE GALA PERFORMANCE SEPT. 29.

SHE WON MORE THAN 20 CURTAIN CALLS.

MISS ALONSO FIRST DANCED GISELLE IN 1943. HER LAST PERFORMANCE OF IT IN THIS COUNTRY WAS IN 1958; SINCE THEN SHE HAS WORKED IN CUBA WITH THE CUBAN NATIONAL BALLET. SHE NOW IS 55, HER VISION STILL MARRED AFTER FOUR OPERATIONS FOR DETACHED RETINAS AND ONE FOR CATARACTS.

BUT THE AGELESSS BALLERINA PROVED ONCE AGAIN ON THE STAGE OF THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE THAT -- LIKE JULIET -- GISELLE IS A ROLE THAT CAN ONLY BE PROPERLY INTERPRETED BY AN ARTIST OF EXPERIENCE AND MATURITY.

HER CONCEPTION OF GISELLE IS OF A YOUNG GIRL RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT THE BLANDISHMENTS OF THE DISGUISED PRINCE, AND ONCE SHE GIVES HERSELF TO HIM WHOLEHEARTEDLY SHE IS RELUCTANT ONCE AGAIN TO BELIEVE HIS BETRAYAL. IN THE SECOND ACT, AS THE DEAD GISELLE RISEN FROM HER GRAVE TO PROTECT ALBRECHT, SHE IS PURE LOVE AND COMPASSION, WITH ALL THE HURTS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS OF LIFE WASHED AWAY.

MISS ALONSO, WITH HER IDEAL DANCER'S BODY AND LYRICAL TECHNIQUE, IS ASTONISHING: HER JOY IN YOUTH EXPRESSED BY EXPANSIVE HIGH LEG EXTENSIONS; STRONG JETES AND TRAVELING FOUETTES WITH DOUBLE BATTEMENTS ON EACH TURN; LIGHTNING-FAST TRAVELING BATTEMENTS.

HER ALBRECHT WAS HER REGULAR PARTNER IN HAVANA, JORGE ESQUIVEL, A BIG STRONG DANCER SOMEWHAT REMINISCENT OF PETER MARTINS, BUT

PROJECTING LITTLE PERSONALITY OR CHARACTERIZATION.

THEY WERE BACKED BY AN EXCEPTIONAL SUPPORTING CAST: MARTINE VAN HAMEL AS THE DEFINITIVE MYRTA, AND MARIANNA TCHERKASSKY AND KIRK PETERSON OUTDOING THEMSELVES IN THE PEASANT PAS DE DEUX.

DESPITE HER DEDICATION TO HER COMPANY IN CUBA, MISS ALONSO STILL REGARDS ABT WITH AFFECTION, BECAUSE IT WAS WITH BALLET THEATRE, AS IT THEN WAS, THAT SHE FIRST DANCED PROFESSIONALLY IN 1940. SHE HAS DANCED AS GUEST ARTIST WITH ABT EACH OF THE PAST THREE YEARS AND NEXT YEAR SHE WILL APPEAR WITH HER CUBAN NATIONAL BALLET IN WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK.

THE OTHER PROGRAM IN ABT'S BRIEF TWO-WEEK SEASON AT THE MET COMPRISED: NATALIA MAKAROVA'S VERSION OF "LA BAYADERE;" JOSE LIMON'S "THE MOOR'S PAVANE;" TWYLA THARP'S "WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE;" AND ESQUIVEL AND ELEANOR D'ANTUONO IN RUDOLF NUREYEV'S VERSION OF THE AGRIPPINA VAGANOVA PAS DEUX, "DIANA AND ACTEON."

THE PRINCIPAL INTEREST WAS IN THE "MOOR'S PAVANE," WITH ERIK BRUHN DANCING HIS FIRST OTHELLO AND MARTINE VAN HAMEL HER FIRST DESDEMONA. IVAN NAGY WAS THE IAGO AND SALLIE WILSON EMILIA. THE DANCING WAS EXCELLENT BUT SOMETHING WAS LACKING DRAMATICALLY IN THE AMBIGUOUS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OTHELLO AND IAGO. FOR ONCE THE WOMEN DOMINATED THE STAGE: VAN HAMEL, GRACEFUL AND ADORING, IN VIRGINAL WHITE; MISS WILSON, JEALOUS AND CONSPIRATORIAL, IN SCARLET.

GELSEY KIRKLAND APPEARED OPPOSITE MIKHAIL BARYSHNIKOV IN "LA BAYADERE," BUT WAS UPSTAGED BY THE THREE SHADOWS: REBECCA WRIGHT, HILDA MORALES, AND MISS TCHERKASSKY. "DIANA AND ACTEON" IS A TYPICAL SEMI-ACROBATIC SOVIET PAS DE DEUX WITH BRAVURA LIFTS AND SERVED MAINLY TO DEMONSTRATE ESQUIVEL AS A MUSCULAR PARTNER AND FINE DANCER BUT NOT MUCH STYLE.

"WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE" PROVED A DELIGHT AS ALWAYS, WITH ITS ORIGINAL CAST OF BARYSHNIKOV, VAN HAMEL AND TCHERKASSKY.

PETER COSTA REVIEWS THE FINAL OFFERING OF ABT IN ITS METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE ENGAGEMENT:

THE AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE IN ITS OCT. 1 PERFORMANCE OF "SWAN LAKE" AT THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE HAS SHOWN ONCE AGAIN THAT A CLASSIC BALLET PERFORMED BY A VIRTUOSO DANCER STILL REMAINS THE BEST COMBINATION FOR PLEASING AN AUDIENCE.

THEIR FULL-LENGTH PRODUCTION OF "SWAN LAKE", CHOREOGRAPHED BY DAVID BLAIR, WAS FIRST PRESENTED BY THE AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE 10 YEARS AGO AND CONTINUES TO BE BRIGHT THOUGH NOT FRESH.

EVA EVDOKIMOVA, IN HER DEBUT IN THE DUAL LEAD OF ODETTE-ODILE, RECEIVED ENTHUSIASTIC APPLAUSE DURING ALMOST EVERY APPEARANCE ON STAGE AS DID HER PARTNER IVAN NAGY AS PRINCE SIEGFRIED.

IN THE ACT II ADAGIO, MISS EVDOKIMOVA'S ODETTE WAS THE ESSENCE OF FRAGILITY, CAPTIVATING THE YOUNG PRINCE WITH HER TREMULOUS FEMINITY. THE SOARING LIFTS AND DIFFICULT SPINS IN THIS PAS DE DEUX WERE PERFECTLY EXECUTED.

IN THE THIRD ACT GRAND PAS DE DEUX, MISS EVDOKIMOVA AS ODILE BEWITCHED THE YOUNG PRINCE WITH BOLD BRAVURA DANCING WHICH CULMINATED IN THE FAMOUS SEQUENCE OF 32 FOUETTES. NAGY'S EXUBERANT SOLO RESPONSE WAS EXCITING THOUGH NOT ELECTRIFYING.

MORE

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By MARY CAMPBELL

AP Newsfeatures Writer

NEW YORK AP - Alicia Alonso, who danced her first "Giselle" in 1943 in the United States, is back to do the difficult ballet. For the first time in years she's here under a visa granted by her native Cuba.

Miss Alonso, one of the century's most highly regarded ballerinas, is 56 and still going strong in a profession whose stars usually retire in their mid 30s.

Miss Alonso, director and prim³ ballerina of the National Ballet of Cuba, takes ballet class for an hour and a half in the morning and rehearses one to three hours in the afternoon, six days a week.

She says isn't sure why she is able to perform a difficult,

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full-length ballet like "Giselle" at her age, but notes, "It is a mistake thinking that dancing is done with the legs. The mind is most important."

This is Miss Alonso's fourth visit to dance in the United States in the last two years but the first in which her visa was issued by Cuba. Previously she had gone from Cuba to Mexico and then on to the United States. Her performance of Giselle will be in New York as a fund-raising gala for American Ballet Theater.

Next year, in May and June, 85 members of the 110-member National Ballet of Cuba will dance in Washington and New York, performances signaling resumption of cultural exchanges between the two countries that ceased when Fidel Castro took power.

Miss Alonso had problems with her vision and for many years was nearly blind. She continued to dance but did not perform "Giselle" for about seven years, until early this year.

Miss Alonso has said recent operations had improved her vision but that she was having trouble keeping her balance on point. But now she says that problem has been solved, too.

For Thursday night's performance here, she says, "I have been studying 'Giselle' again, going through it in my mind, trying to find out new things. You should go ahead, not just try to memorize what you used to do.

" 'Giselle' is a masterpiece of the romanticists and I think it is a masterpiece of the sensibility of love. It is very delicate. I don't think it will ever age and I think people, no matter how old they are, will always get a little knot in their throats because of its purity and its story."

Miss Alonso is frequently called a legend. "I don't know what to think about that," she says. "When I find very young people saying, 'I've heard so much about you, I want so much to see you dance,' I think maybe that is what they mean by legend. That is very beautiful."

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ALONSO (ARTS; ENTERTAINMENT) (2 TAKES)

BY JUDY BACHRACH

(C) 1976; THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON - IN SOME STRANGE WAY; IT'S AS IF NOTHING HAD HAPPENED. AS IF SHE'D NEVER BEEN AWAY; AS IF SHE HADN'T AGED; AS IF NOTHING HAD ALTERED HER COUNTRY. OR OURS. HER LIFE. OR OURS.

BUT ALICIA ALONSO, ONE OF THE MOST SPECTACULAR BALLERINAS IN THE WORLD AND CUBA'S GREATEST EXPORT; IS, IN FACT, MIDDLE-AGED. AND WE HAVE NOT SEEN HER IN A VERY LONG TIME.

SHE RETURNED TO THE COUNTRY OF HER FIRST TRIUMPH ONLY LAST YEAR. SHE RETURNED TO WASHINGTON ONLY A FEW DAYS AGO AFTER 15 LONG YEARS. AND SO NOW SHE IS IN THE WATERGATE HOTEL ROOM THE MORNING AFTER HER PERFORMANCE TUESDAY AT LHEO!RICAN BALLET THEATER BENEFIT; MOST PHILOSOPHIC ABOUT THE PROLONGED ABSENCE.

"WELL; YOU MISS YOUR FRIENDS;" SHE SAYS; HER VOICE HUSKY; HER ACCENT HEAVY; "YOU MISS THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES. BUT AT THE SAME TIME; IF YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT IS THE CAUSE; IT DOESN'T HURT. I UNDERSTAND IT WAS NOT THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES WHO

SAY "NO" FOR ME TO COME HERE."

IT WAS THE GOVERNMENT?

SHE NODS; THEN PAUSES TO STARE SHREWDLY AT THE INTERVIEWER.

"YOU UNDERSTAND," SHE SAYS FINALLY.

SHE HAS UNFATHOMABLE EYES; ALICIA ALONSO; SLANTED AND DARK; ONE OF THEM LOOKING ALMOST DEADENED FROM THE RETINA AND CATARACT OPERATIONS SHE HAS ENDURED SO OFTEN. FOR 10 YEARS SHE WAS BLIND; CAPABLE OF SEEING ONLY VERY STRONG LIGHTS - BUT STILL SHE DANCED.

"EVERY TIME; THEY SAY TO ME I CANNOT DANCE. MY DOCTORS HAVE NOT YET CLOSED THEIR MOUTHS." HER 1972 OPERATION IMPROVED HER SIGHT SO THAT NOW SHE NO LONGER RELIES ON STRONG LIGHTS ON THE STAGE TO MARK WHERE SHE IS GOING.

BUT WOUNDED ORN OT; THOSE EYES TAKE YOUR MEASURE AS YOU WALK IN; THEY ARE THE TWO FIRM ANCHORS OF A STRONG FACE; THE LONG SHARP NOSE; THE THIN LIPS THAT CURL WITH AMUSEMENT; THE FINE HEAD BALANCED PERFECTLY ON AN ELONGATED NECK. SHE KNOWS WHO SHE IS.

"I DON'T THINK A BALLERINA KNOWS SHE IS A GREAT BALLERINA," SHE SAYS. "I THINK SHE KNOWS SHE HAS IMPROVED. SHE FEELS SHE HAS A NAME."

"YOU SEE THERE ARE TWO PEOPLE. ONE IS A PERSON WHO HAS ACHIEVED RESPONSIBILITY IN HER CAREER. THE OTHER IS A PERSON WHO HAS TO KNOW; TO REALIZE HOW MUCH SHE HAS TO LEARN."

AND WHEN; THEN; DOES SHE EXPECT TO ACHIEVE THE PINNACLE OF GREATNESS?

"WHEN I STOP. WHEN I CAN GIVE NO MORE."

THIS IS ANYTHING BUT MODESTY ON HER PART; FOR ALICIA ALONSO IS NOT MODEST; ALTHOUGH SHE DOES ASPIRE TO A CERTAIN HUMILITY. IT IS A STATEMENT OF FACT. ASK HER IF SHE'S AN IMPORTANT PERSON IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY; FOR INSTANCE; AND SHE'LL REPLY: "I'M AN IMPORTANT PERSON IN MY COUNTRY. NO; I AM NOT IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY."

ASK HER; TOO; WHY SHE - AT THE HEIGHT OF HER CAREER IN THE AMERICAN BALLET THEATER; ACCLAIMED AND ABORED - RETURNED TO CASTRO'S CUBA; AND SHE'LL SAY: "I NEVER LEFT CUBA." AND THAT ALSO IS TRUE:

SHE ALWAYS HAD HER HOME IN HAVANA; A PLACE SHE SHARED WITH HER FIRST HUSBAND; DANCER FERNANDO ALONSO; AS WELL AS 200 PET BIRDS.

HER HUSBAND WAS "NOT A GREAT DANCER - HE WAS NICE ON STAGE."

TOGETHER THEY FOUNDED THE NATIONAL BALLET OF CUBA.

"BUT WHY DO WE TALK ABOUT HIM?" SHE ASKS; LAUGHING; "AFTER SO MANY YEARS OF GIVING HIM HALF THE CREDIT." SHE DOESN'T WANT TO GIVE HIM CREDIT ANY LONGER.

WELL; SO MUCH FOR THE EX-HUSBAND; BUT WHAT ABOUT THE 200 SINGING

BIRDS?

"SLOWLY THEY DIE; SOME OF THEM. AND SOME OF THEM; THEY GET OLD AND WE DECIDED THEY SHOULD BE FREE."

SHE WAS BORN TO A MOST BOURGEOIS FAMILY; THE YOUNGEST OF FOUR CHILDREN; AND HER FATHER WAS A LIEUTENANT IN THE ARMY. BALLET

LESSONS BEGAN AT NINE; AND SHE TOLD FORMER INTERVIEWERS SHE USED TO DANCE IN SNEAKERS BECAUSE THEN THERE WERE NO BALLET SHOES IN CUBA. WHAT SHE DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE TOLD ANYONE IS HER AGE; A BIT OF COYNESS THAT DOESN'T MATCH THE REST OF HER TEMPERAMENT.

WHEN DID YOU COME TO THIS COUNTRY? SHE IS ASKED. ALONSO BURSTS OUT LAUGHING; TURNS TO THE DANCE CRITIC BESIDE HER. "SHE WANTS TO KNOW HOW OLD I AM."

WELL; NOT REALLY; BUT OTHER PEOPLE MIGHT. "WELL; YOU TELL THEM TO COME SEE ME DANCE;" SHE SAYS PROUDLY "AND THEN THEY SEE HOW OLD I AM."

IN AMERICA SHE DANCED IN THE CHORUSES OF BROADWAY MUSICALS - "GREAT LADY" AND "STARS IN YOUR EYES." IN 1940 SHE JOINED THE AMERICAN BALLET THEATER'S CORPS DE BALLET; WITHIN MONTHS SHE SOLOED AS A BIRD IN "PETER AND THE WOLF." SHE BECAME, IN OTHER WORDS; A PRINCIPAL; A STAR ON PAR WITH MARGOT FONTEYN YESTERDAY; WITH MAKAROVA TODAY.

BUT EACH YEAR SHE RETURNED TO CUBA AND HER BALLET NACIONAL. THOSE WERE THE BATTISTA DAYS.

(MORE TO COME)

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1ST ADD ALONSO (BACHRACH: POST)

XXX THE BATTISTA DAYS.

"THE DICTATORSHIP YOU MEAN," SHE CORRECTS. HER FEATURES HARDEN PERCEPTIBLY; THE MOUTH TIGHTENS. "I STOP IT IN 1956. EACH YEAR THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT GIVING US ENOUGH MONEY TO LIVE. SO THEY KEEP TAKING AWAY OUR SMALL SUBSIDIES; AND THE DANCERS HAD TO WORK IN NIGHTCLUBS AND THEY WERE DEAD TIRED IN THE MORNING.

"BUT THE LAST THING; THE MAIN THING IS (THE GOVERNMENT) OFFERED ME MONEY - \$500 A MONTH FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE - IN EXCHANGE FOR ME TO KEEP MY MOUTH SHUT. FOR ME THE MOST VALUABLE THING WAS MY WORK.

"SO THEN I SAY: 'I STOP DANCING IN CUBA' "

SO THEN SHE DID.

UNTIL THE REVOLUTION CAME.

IN CUBA SHE WILL SAY (ALTHOUGH SHE'S ANYTHING BUT ANXIOUS TO TALK POLITICS - IT MIGHT NOT BE THE RIGHT MOMENT) IN CUBA TODAY HOSPITALS ARE FREE; AND THE CHILDREN CAN READ AND WRITE. IN CUBA THEY UNDERSTAND "ARTISTIC CULTURE FOR THE PEOPLE."

HER VOICE DESCENDS TO A MONOTONE AS SHE TICKS OFF NAMES; "I

KNOW FIDEL; I HAVE KNOWN CHE GUEVARA . . . "

WELL; THAT MUST BE VERY EXCITING." SHE PAUSES FOR EFFECT; THEN SAYS WITH GENTLY GRAVITY; "IT IS AN HONOR."

BUT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE SHE SAYS; "I PREFER IF WE TALK ABOUT JUST DANCING."

WHY? HAS ANYBODY IN HER COUNTRY TOLD HER NOT TO TALK POLITICS?

OUTRAGED; BUT LAUGHING; SHE PULLS HERSELF UP EVEN STRAIGHTER.

"NO ONE FROM MY COUNTRY CAN TELL ME. NO ONE CAN TELL ME. TO MYSELF I'M RIGHT."

ALICIA ALONSO; NOW AT LEAST 54; IS A GRANDMOTHER. SHE WAS REMARRIED A YEAR AGO - THIS TIME TO PEDRO SIMON; A WRITER AND A LAWYER. AND SHE HAS A HOUSE WITH A YARD WHERE THREE DOGS ROMP ALONGSIDE A DUCK WHO WADDLES TOWARD HER WHENEVER SHE CALLS HIM. AND SHE'S CRAZY ABOUT SCIENCE FICTION AND WILL REFER CONSTANTLY TO OUTER SPACE AND ITS POSSIBLE CREATURES. AND SHE STILL DANCES - TUESDAY NIGHT BROUGHT HER "SWAN LAKE EXCERPT A FIVE-MINUTE OVATION.

AND SO IT SEEMS LIKE A PRETTY GOOD LIFE! ALL IN ALL; AND MAYBE THAT IS WHY SHE SAYS SHE LOVES PEOPLE. WHICH MAY SOUND LIKE A PRETTY CORNY THEME; BUT IT'S ONE SHE HARPS ON A LOT. IT'S ONE THAT SIMPLY REFUSES TO EXIST FROM THE CONVERSATION - UNTIL EITHER DESPITE OR BECAUSE OF HER INNATE SHREWDSNESS; SHE DEFEATS YOU WITH HER TALK OF LOVE.

"I THINK IT'S FANTASTIC," SHE WILL SAY, "WHEN YOU READ HISTORY
HOW WE'VE SURVIVED AND GROWN AND MAKE EACH TIME IN OUR LIVES
BETTER. AND SOME DAY I KNOW WE'LL BE A BIG FAMILY . . ."

BUT, YOU SAY (BECAUSE IT DOES SEEM NAIVE, REALLY, HEARING A
WORLDLY, CLEVER WOMAN TALK LIKE THAT), BUT LOOK MISS ALONSO,
SOME TERRIBLE THINGS HAPPEN. ALL THE TIME IN FACT. WARS - ALL
OF THAT.

AND ALICIA ALONSO SMILES. "I KNOW," SHE SAYS, "BUT HERE WE
ARE, YOU AND I."

HH SENT APRIL 8